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HEADLINE: Connally takes secrets of JFK bullet to grave

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BODY:

THE former Texas Governor, John Connally, was buried in the state capital Austin yesterday, taking to the grave fragments of a bullet which researchers believe could hold vital clues to the 1963 assassination of President Kennedy. Mr Connally, who died this week aged 76, was in the open-top limousine with JFK and Mrs Jacqueline Kennedy when the shooting took place and was the only other person wounded. After an approach from historical researchers the Department of Justice and the FBI tried throughout yesterday to contact the family to seek permission to remove the 30-year-old slivers of

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metal which doctors at the time left in Mr Connally's wrist and thigh. They were unsuccessful. Last night a spokesman for the Justice Department said: "Governor Connally has been buried, but that may not be the end of the matter. Obviously it would be possible to exhume the body if the family can be persuaded at a later date that the fragments of bullet are important evidence." The former Governor was buried after lying in state at the Texas House of Representatives. Mourners included ex-President Richard Nixon and President Johnson's widow, Lady Bird. The bullet which hit the Governor - dubbed the "magic bullet" because of its erratic path - is believed to have been the second of three fired by Lee Harvey Oswald and is kept in the national archives. It hit the President in the back and exited through his throat before entering Governor Connally's right armpit, emerging through his right chest and going on to smash his right wrist before entering his left thigh. It was later found on his stretcher in hospital. But researchers think the slivers which remained in his body could belong to another bullet fired within a split second. Oswald's cheap, bolt-action rifle could not have fired both, it is argued. Mr Connally believed he was the prime target because, as Navy Secretary, he had rejected a request from Oswald to have his undesirable discharge from the Marines upgraded.